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20 July 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Security

SUBJECT : Proposed Upgrading of the Security Level of COINS

1. The Community On-Line Intelligence System (COINS) is a network of computers within selected elements of the USIB Committee which permits users from one agency to query selected intelligence files maintained in the computers of other agencies. This network has been operating on a pilot basis for about four years, and was developed at the direction of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB).

2. In planning the operation of the network to date, a basic assumption to be guaranteed by participating agencies was the establishment of a security level for the entire system of Top Secret COMINT. This has meant that to date the system is protected from a physical and personnel access security view-point to the TS/SI level, even though all files contained in the system are not necessarily classified as high as Top Secret, nor restricted to SI material.

3. To date no TK material has been introduced into COINS, and the system at present is not secured to the TK level. At the 19 July 1972 meeting of the USIB Intelligence Handling Committee (IHC), the DIA representative delivered a memorandum to the Chairman, IHC, requesting that action be taken to upgrade the security level of the COINS network to include TK material. In the discussion that took place at the meeting, it appears that the several subsystems of the network in the various participating agencies can easily be upgraded from an access control standpoint to this level. For example, COINS terminals in CIA are already secured at the SI/TK level.
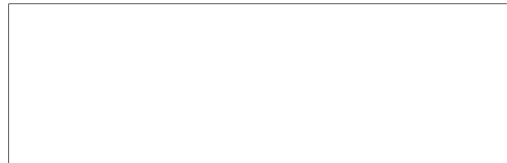
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4. During the IHC Meeting of 19 July the Chairman solicited my comments on the proposal, and also asked whether you would endorse a request to be originated by him to the Chairman, USIB, soliciting approval to upgrade the security level of COINS. I commented personally that such upgrading was a worthwhile Committee objective, and should pose few security problems from an administrative standpoint; I indicated that I could not speak for the Chairman of the Security Committee, but that I would report to you on the proposal.

5. Upgrading of the security level of COINS to the TK level has for at least several months, if not longer, been an avowed goal in the development of COINS, and its hoped for transition from a test status to an operational entity. Such upgrading will, among other objectives, permit more useful participation in the network on the part of the National Photo-graphic Interpretation Center (NPIC). I believe that any security problems involved in the DIA proposal are of a minor and surmountable nature, and recommend that you endorse the DIA proposal when it is reformatted by the Chairman, IHC, as a request for DCI approval. I am attaching a copy of the DIA memorandum.

6. After the 19 July IHC Meeting, the Chairman indicated he would furnish me a copy of his draft proposal as soon as it is prepared. I attempted to discuss the matter with Chief, Special Security Center on 19 July, and will do so upon his return from leave next week. I have no reason to believe that he would take issue with the proposal, since TK material introduced into COINS would be handled in an appropriately secure fashion.

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Chairman
Computer Security Subcommittee

Att
    Memo dtd 18 July 72
    from DIA Member, IHC

Copy sent to SSC 26 July 1972

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